

Septic Tank Systems: Tips for Homeowners

What Is A Septic Tank System?

A septic tank system is an underground private sewage disposal system. It is the best method of sewage disposal in areas where sewage disposal facilities (sanitary sewers) are not available and where drainage is acceptable. A septic tank system typically consists of two parts:

1. *Septic Tank* – a water tight concrete container that receives untreated household waste. Solids are retained here.
2. *Tile Field* – a series of perforated pipes which distribute the liquid from the septic tank to the surrounding below ground soil.

Tips To Protecting Your Septic System – Do's and Don'ts

1. **DO** have your system pumped out by a licensed operator every 3 years, depending on use.
2. **DO** know where your septic system is located and have a way to reach it so it can be pumped easily.
3. **DO** limit the amount of kitchen waste you put into the system through a garbage disposal.
4. **DO** make normal use of bleaches, detergents, soaps, and drain cleaners.
5. **DO NOT** allow trees and shrubs to grow over the septic field.
6. **DO NOT** connect downspouts, sump pumps, or water softener backwash to the septic system.
7. **DO NOT** put harmful materials down your drains such as fats, oils, plastic, paper towels, etc.

Why Should I Maintain My Septic System?

- Saves money – failing septic systems are expensive to repair and replace.
- Protects health and the environment – prevents the spread of infection and diseases and protects water resources.

Warning Signs of a Septic System Failure

- Odors, surfacing sewage, wet spots, or lush vegetation in the drain field area.
- Plumbing or septic tank backups.
- Gurgling sounds in the plumbing system.

Who Do I Contact to Have My System Inspected?

Macomb County Health Department (MCHD) personnel are trained to perform system inspections. Call: (586) 469-5236 for details.

What Does An Inspection Include?

1. Locating the system
2. Soils evaluation
3. Uncovering access holes
4. Flushing the toilets
5. Checking for signs of backup
6. Measuring scum and sludge layers
7. Identifying any leaks
8. Inspecting mechanical components
9. Pumping the tank if necessary

For more information, contact the MCHD at: (586) 469-5236, or visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at: www.epa.gov/own/onsite.